Fireworks: Make Your Fourth of July Happy and Safe

Fireworks, picnics, parades and celebrations go together, especially during the Fourth of July. Fireworks are thrilling and beautiful… and dangerous. Here's how to keep your loved ones from getting burned or blinded.

Naval Safety Center
www.safetycenter.navy.mil

Fireworks: General Safety Tips

- Never allow children to play with or ignite fireworks
- Read and follow all warnings and instructions
- Be sure other people are out of range before lighting fireworks.
- Only light fireworks on a smooth, flat surface away from the house, dry leaves, and flammable materials.
- Never try to relight fireworks that have not fully functioned.
- Keep a bucket of water in case of a malfunction or fire.
- Fireworks should be used only with extreme caution. Older children should be closely supervised, and younger children should not be allowed to play with fireworks.

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Fireworks Safety: Typical Mishaps

Although most fireworks can be relatively safe with proper and careful usage, some fireworks, such as illegal fireworks, present substantial risks that can result in deaths, blindings, amputations and severe burns.

✯ **On the 4th of July 2002, a sailor was injured when a Roman Candle didn't go off. As he looked down the barrel, the fireworks exploded, seriously injuring his face, eye and brain. He was placed on life support, but died after being taken off it.**

These mishaps were reported to the Consumer Product Safety Commission:

✯An 8-year-old suffered 2nd and 3rd degree burns to her leg when a spark from a sparkler she was holding ignited her dress.

✯ A 19-year-old man was holding a large firecracker that exploded when it was lit. He lost the tips of his left index and middle fingers and broke his thumb. He underwent numerous surgeries.

✯ A 43-year-old man was struck in the eye when a bottle rocket went under his glasses and into his eye. After surgery, his vision was still blurry.

Fireworks Safety: What's Illegal?

The Federal Hazardous Substances Act prohibits the sale of the most dangerous types of fireworks to consumers, including:

- large reloadable mortar shells
- cherry bombs
- aerial bombs
- M-80 salutes
- larger firecrackers containing more than two grains (130 milligrams) of powder
- mail-order kits designed to build these fireworks

All fireworks must carry a warning label describing necessary safety precautions and instructions for safe use.

Fireworks Safety: Planning Your Own Show?

Before using fireworks, make sure they are permitted in your state or local area. Attending a professional display is the safest way to go.

Many states and local governments prohibit or limit consumer fireworks, formerly known as class C fireworks, which are the common fireworks and firecrackers sold for consumer use.

Consumer fireworks include shells and mortars, multiple tube devices, Roman Candles, rockets, sparklers, firecrackers with no more than 50 milligrams of powder and novelty items such as snakes and airplanes.

Fireworks Safety: Who Gets Hurt?

According to the CPSC, fireworks accounted for approximately 9,600 injuries in the year 2004. Nearly 17 percent were eye-related.

- **Bystanders are injured more often than the people who fire off the fireworks.**
- **The highest injury estimates were for firecrackers (26%), rockets (21%) and sparklers (11%).**
- **Almost half (47%) of the injuries were to children under age 15.**
- **Sparklers can heat up to 1,800 degrees Fahrenheit.**

Fireworks Safety: Who Gets Hurt?, cont.

- Parts of the body most often injured are the hands (32%), eyes (28%) and head/face (16%).
- There were eight deaths from fireworks in 2004.
- Fireworks sent 6,600 people to the emergency room during the 2004 Fourth of July holiday period.
- For children under the age of five, sparklers account for three-quarters of all fireworks injuries.

Fireworks Safety: State Laws

33 States Allow Some Or All Types Of Consumer Fireworks (formerly known as Class C fireworks)

Illinois has more restrictions than does Missouri

Some states prohibit all types of fireworks – it's important to know your state laws!